



WCDA Newsletter

2017 July - December

WASHOE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



Prosecutors Kelly Kossow and Zelalem Bogale addressing the court

HIGH PROFILE GANG PROSECUTION RESULTS IN TWO LIFE SENTENCES

In early October 2017, a prosecution team began a high profile two-week murder trial that ended in guilty verdicts on two counts of 1st degree murder with use of a deadly weapon. Immediately following the jury's finding of guilt, the same jury sentenced Luis Alejandro Menendez-Cordero, a documented MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha) gang member, to two terms of life in prison without the possibility of

parole. In a later sentencing on the involved deadly weapon enhancements, the Honorable Connie Steinheimer ordered that the life sentences shall run consecutive to one another. Further, she levied the maximum sentence for the deadly weapon enhancements, thereby concluding the case with the maximum possible sentences imposed.

MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT ATTORNEY CHRIS HICKS:

Greetings and Happy New Year! Thank you for your continued interest in the work of the Washoe County District Attorney's Office. This is the second publication of the office's biannual newsletter. The year 2017 was busy for the men and women of the DA's Office who proudly serve this great community. It is my pleasure to provide you a glimpse into some of our team's accomplishments. I hope you enjoy it.

I encourage you to contact my office with suggestions for future articles. Have a safe and happy beginning of 2018.

Chris Hicks

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Throughout the trial, Chief Deputy District Attorney Kelly Ann Kossow, Deputy District Attorney Zelalem Bogale, and the prosecution team worked closely with

local law enforcement, federal agencies, and others on security issues that often stem from gang prosecutions. These types of cases present unique challenges to prosecutors with regard to witness testimony and courtroom security. At one point in the trial, a gag-order was secured when jail calls placed by the defendant containing threats to witnesses were intercepted. Ultimately, the evidence showed that Menendez-Cordero, also known as "Apocalypto," was guilty of having shot and killed two Sparks men in 2010 over simple statements he perceived to be disrespectful. After the murder, detectives with the Sparks Police Department (SPD) identified Menendez-Cordero as the shooter and tracked him as he fled through California. Unfortunately, he was able to avoid capture and flee to El Salvador, where he remained for several years before he was located by federal authorities who assisted this office and SPD in extraditing him back to Washoe County to stand trial.

Facts of the Case:

On November 20, 2010, the Sparks Police Department (SPD) responded to a report of a shooting at 1000 El Rancho #A5. When officers arrived, they located two victims, Moises Vazquez, 21 and Kevin Melendez, 19. Melendez was shot twice in the back and Vazquez was shot below his right eye.

Both victims received life saving measures at the scene and were transported to Renown

hospital where they eventually succumbed to their injuries. SPD Detectives located witnesses who were able to describe the shooting and identify the suspect, who was known to them as "Apo." Detectives determined there was a small gathering at the apartment that included the residents and some of their acquaintances. Menendez-Cordero and another man were also at the party. At one point in the evening, Menendez-Cordero and his associate left to smoke a cigarette. A short time later, Menendez-Cordero returned alone, armed with a handgun. He quickly walked into the apartment and shot the two victims at close range, motivated by what he took as disrespectful comments said by the victims about the MS-13 gang. Menendez-Cordero also attempted to shoot a third victim, but the gun malfunctioned and he fled. During the investigation, SPD detectives worked with the Reno Police Department's Regional Gang Unit to identify the suspect and were able to determine he had connections to California and El Salvador. Menendez-Cordero was tracked to Sacramento and Los Angeles before he escaped to El Salvador with the aid of other MS-13 gang members.

Verdict Statement from District Attorney Chris Hicks:

"This case highlights the stalwart collaboration that exists amongst law enforcement in our community. Throughout the prosecution and investigation of this case, a number of agencies made significant contributions that brought this dangerous defendant to justice. SPD quickly identified Menendez-Cordero and thoroughly investigated the case. This agency's SWAT Team also played a critical role during the murder trial. Both the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service were instrumental in working with the El Salvadorian

In This Edition...

- 1 MS-13 Prosecution and Sentencing
- 3 Paws 4 Love
- 4 Trial Attorneys of the Year – 2017
- 4 Tribute to Judge Patrick Flanagan
- 5 Employee Spotlight
– John “JJ” Stallings
- 6 Good Samaritans Honored
- 6 Investigator Emmett Florez
– WCFG Competitor
- 7 Kristin Erickson
– Prosecutor and Lobbyist
- 8 WCDA UNR Alumni
- 9 Division Spotlight
– Civil Division
- 10 Habitual Criminal Sentencings
- 12 CAC – 2017 Impact Award
- 12 Community Engagement & Forums
- 13 Holiday Cheer

Government to arrest and extradite Menendez-Cordero. The Reno Police Department's Regional Gang Unit and the Washoe County Sheriff's Office made significant contributions with trial security measures. The Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration also assisted with witness transportation. In addition, the testimony of several courageous witnesses who bravely came forward in this case deserves recognition. Finally, our jury deserves acknowledgement as well. As the pulse of our community, their swift verdicts and life without the possibility of parole sentences send a strong message."

Paws 4 Love



The Paws 4 Love Therapy Dogs – Justice Dogs Program has partnered with the District Attorney's Office to make a difference with our victims. These specially trained K-9s provide much needed companionship for victims and witnesses of all ages during stressful court appearances. Teams are also regularly on hand at the Washoe County Child Advocacy Center to provide emotional support and comfort to children who have been victims of physical and sexual abuse. For more information about this valuable program, visit their website.

Paws 4 Love

<http://www.paws4lovereno.org/>

- 2017 -



Nathan MacLellan and Michael Bolenbaker

Trial Attorneys of the Year

The WCDA's Office Criminal Division honors the Deputy District Attorney (DDA) who completes the most jury trials in the preceding year with the distinction of "Trial Dog." In 2016, there was a tie between two DDAs, Michael Bolenbaker and Zelalem Bogale, who completed 6 trials each. In 2017, there was yet another tie with a score of 6 trials. DDA Michael Bolenbaker once again shared the honors, this time with Deputy District Attorney Nathan MacLellan. Both were impressive in their efforts to bring violent offenders to justice and are truly deserving of recognition. The trials included offenders charged with a multitude of crimes ranging from theft and stolen property offenses to violent domestic batterers and murderers. In one of DDA MacLellan's more complex cases, Jonathan Jaramillo, a documented gang member, was found guilty of having shot and killed an associate. Jaramillo was ultimately convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. Among DDA Bolenbaker's trials was the case of Roberto Anthony Ramirez. Ramirez was convicted on multiple counts of robbery and other violent offenses against elderly victims. He was eventually sentenced to life in prison. In a later article, we honor several "Good Samaritans" involved in the case. Yet another of DDA MacLellan's cases was that of Orville Curtis, convicted of having sold heroin and methamphetamine in the presence of his 18 month old son. Curtis fled shortly after his arrest while out on bail and awaiting trial. He was eventually arrested in November 2016 and later found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in prison. Bolenbaker and MacLellan have been with the DA's office for 6 and 4.5 years, respectively. Their work represents the dedication of our prosecutors to holding criminals accountable and bringing justice to victims of crime.

In Remembrance of the Honorable Judge Patrick Flanagan



1953 - 2017

The Honorable Judge Patrick Flanagan passed away in October. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends. All of us at the WCDA's Office were genuinely saddened to hear of his passing. He was a cherished friend to many in the office and a respected colleague. In the courtroom, Judge Flanagan was as compassionate as he was tough. He was an extraordinary jurist who was committed to the administration of justice. We held the utmost respect for him and count ourselves fortunate to have worked with such an honorable man. Judge Flanagan's kind spirit and thoughtful commentary touched so many of us over the years. His absence in our lives and on the bench will be felt in so many ways.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Washoe County District Attorney's Office

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

WCDA INVESTIGATOR JOHN "JJ" STALLINGS RECOGNIZED AS LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONAL OF THE MONTH



Former DA Dick Gammick with Stallings and DA Hicks

WCDA Investigator John "JJ" Stallings was recognized by the Rotary Club of Reno in September for his exemplary work in law enforcement. JJ has worked with the District Attorney's Office for over 4 years and was awarded the Rotary's "Law Enforcement Professional of the Month" award for his outstanding work in the Investigations Division, which includes his time working within the office's innovative Domestic Violence Early Intervention Program.

Instituted in the fall of 2015, the District Attorney's Office's Domestic Violence Early Intervention Program established new procedures designed to enhance the prosecution of domestic violence cases through early and improved victim contact. JJ was the first investigator assigned to the program and he has been instrumental in its success. The program continues to build improved relationships with victims and strengthen criminal cases. Victims of domestic violence are sometimes reluctant to cooperate in these difficult and emotional cases. Investigator Stallings works side by side with DA Victim Advocates to build rapport and assist victims with locating resources they may need for recovery, while at the same time improving the chances of a successful prosecution.

Did You Know?

DA Investigators and Victim Advocates within the Domestic Violence Early Intervention Program made contact with over 1,000 victims of domestic violence in 2017.

In Nevada,

- *One domestic violence offense occurs every 18 minutes, 28 seconds*
- *Close to 1/3 of all domestic violence incidents are committed with 1 or more children present*

Domestic Violence Resource Center

Website:

<https://domesticviolenceresourcecenter.org/>

Email:

info@domesticviolenceresourcecenter.org

24 Hour Hotline: (775) 329-4150

Crisis Call Center

Website: <http://crisiscallcenter.org/>

Email: info@crisiscallcenter.org

24 Hour Hotline: (775) 784-8090 or text "ANSWER" to 839863

Nevada Coalition to END Domestic and Sexual Violence

Website: <http://www.ncedsv.org/>

Phone: (775) 828-1115

WCDA Victim Witness Assistance Center

Phone: (775) 328-3210

GOOD SAMARITANS

— HONORED —

In the last newsletter, the prosecution of Roberto Anthony Ramirez was highlighted. Ramirez was sentenced to life in prison without parole after being convicted on robbery and burglary charges that involved particularly violent acts committed against two elderly victims who were brutally attacked in their own homes. In December, the Reno City Council honored several Good Samaritans who came to the aid of one of the victims in the case.

District Attorney Chris Hicks, Deputy District Attorney Michael Bolenbaker, who prosecuted the Ramirez case, and others involved in the prosecution were on-hand to thank these brave citizens who put their own safety at risk in an effort to help an elderly citizen in need. At the Council



meeting, Reno Police Department Chief Jason Soto presented Michael Orlick Jr, owner of Battle Born Tree Service, and three of his employees; Stephen Conroy, Ronald Petrie, and Shawn Sulli, with Chief's Commendations. The citizens were credited with having come to the aid of the 74 year old victim by intervening during the robbery, then carrying the injured man to safety after he had been pistol whipped.

Did You Know?



WCDA Investigator Emmett Florez has competed 10 times in the World Police and Fire Games in the sport of wrestling. Recently, he received silver and bronze medals in the 2017 games held in Los Angeles for wins in Greco-Roman and Freestyle. The Police and Fire Games are held each year, hosting law enforcement and firefighter professionals from around the world in Olympic competitions.

KRISTIN ERICKSON - PROSECUTOR AND LOBBYIST



You began your career here 25 years ago. As a longtime prosecutor, what has changed since you first started?

When I started prosecuting cases in the 1900s, 1992 to be exact, there were very few female defendants and the crimes they committed were usually non-violent. Today, female defendants in the criminal justice system are commonplace. Although violent crime has definitely increased, typically the crimes committed are fraud-based and done to support a drug addiction. Fortunately, Washoe County now has several outstanding drug courts to address this issue.

In 2003 you were selected to represent prosecutors at the Nevada State Legislature. Since then, you have played an integral role in the passage of many public safety and victim-based bills. What was that experience like?

I never fully understood the importance of having a prosecutor at the legislature until I was “volunteered” to represent the Nevada District Attorneys Association during the 2003 session. There are hundreds of bills affecting criminal justice each session and the majority of legislators have little, if any, experience with criminal law. It is vitally important to have someone there who can explain the pros, cons and unintended consequences of proposed legislation. Many times an idea seems great on paper, when in reality, it could have dire consequences.

What career highlights would you like to share?

It was an honor to serve eight sessions as a lobbyist for the District Attorneys throughout the state. Although not a perfect process, it is the best I have seen. Being a recipient of the William J. Raggio Award and the Chief's Certificate of Commendation from the Reno Police Department was extremely humbling. Truly, I have worked with some amazing people throughout my career. It takes the effort of a great many people to put a case together for prosecution. The dedication of the staff at the Washoe County District Attorney's Office and the many officers with whom I have worked with over the years is second to none.



What would you say to a new prosecutor just coming onboard?

I can't imagine a better, more exciting or rewarding career. As a prosecutor, you have a tremendous amount of responsibility. Your discretion must be used wisely and thoughtfully as you affect the lives of defendants and victims on a daily basis. Having the ability to do the right thing, whatever that is, is extremely rewarding and can never be taken for granted.

WE ARE WOLF PACK PROUD!



UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA – RENO ALUMNI

■ **1978**

Jo Lee Wickes

■ **1984**

Paul Lipparelli

■ **1985**

Kari Cordisco

■ **1986**

Dianne Drinkwater

■ **1987**

Roy Stralla

■ **1988**

Kristin Erickson

■ **1991**

Derek Dreiling
David Watts-Vial

■ **1993**

Jeff Martin
Danielle Rasmussen

■ **1994**

Kelly Kossow

■ **1996**

Mark Covington

■ **1997**

Nathan Edwards

■ **1998**

Charles Aglubat
Nicole Hicks (Moschello)
Erica Jackson (Jones)
Jeff Martin

■ **1999**

Alicia Agrella

■ **2000**

Travis Lucia
Robin Sharpe

■ **2001**

Vicky Jakubowski

■ **2002**

Carrie Morton

■ **2004**

Michelle Bays
Zelalem Bogale
Margaret (Margy) Ford
Stephanie Shuman

■ **2006**

Walter Camarena

■ **2007**

Rachel Steinman

■ **2008**

Marilee Cate
Annalise Lockhart
Gary Muro

■ **2009**

Michelle Bays
Natasha Cain
William Mantle
Brittany Puzey
Christina Tonkins

■ **2010**

Daniela Murillo
Nate Vohland

■ **2011**

Alexis Aukenthaler
William Mantle

■ **2012**

Christopher Day

■ **2014**

Lauren Wilson

■ **2015**

Alexis Aukenthaler

■ **2016**

Alexander Armitage

DIVISION SPOTLIGHT

The Washoe County

District Attorney's Office Civil Division



The Civil Division is led by Assistant District Attorney Paul Lipparelli, who has worked for the office for 19 years and estimates he has logged over 5,000 hours serving as legal counsel for Washoe County's public bodies.

Under his direction, the Civil Division provides legal representation to all elected and appointed officials of Washoe County, as well as to over 68 boards, agencies, and commissions through which County services are provided to the public.

Other units or divisions under the umbrella of the Civil Division are:

Family Support:

This division establishes and enforces the parental obligation to pay support for the children of Washoe County; provides child support enforcement services for parents outside of Washoe County; and enforces or modifies support decrees to assure adequate support payments and medical insurance coverage for children residing in Washoe County. In 2017, the division collected over \$27 million dollars in financial support for children and was recognized as the #1 family support collection unit in our state.

Forfeiture Unit:

The Forfeiture Unit is headed by Deputy District Attorney Keith Munro who works with law enforcement to seize assets gained through criminal enterprise. Through a formal civil process, the office is able to sell assets and property used for or purchased

with money generated from the illegal sale of narcotics. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal proceeds are seized each year, which are used to support public safety initiatives and programs in the community.

Child Protective Services:

The Child Protective Services unit is run by Chief Deputy District Attorney Jeff Martin who leads a team of six Deputy District Attorneys (DDAs) and five Legal Secretaries in the handling of the sensitive and complex civil cases arising out of child abuse and neglect. The unit works primarily with the family courts and Washoe County's Human Services Agency (formerly Social Services) on issues related to child dependency when there are allegations of a child in need of protection. In some cases, the office seeks termination of parental rights.

Did You Know?

The WCDA Fraud Check Diversion Program has returned over 10 million dollars to local businesses in Washoe County. The program was established in 1992 in order to assist local businesses recoup losses due to receipt of fraudulent, non-sufficient funds, or closed account checks. Nevada law authorizes the District Attorney's Office to design and supervise this diversion program in the hopes of obtaining full restitution from fraud check writers by providing them with the incentive of paying restitution and avoiding criminal prosecution. Failure in the program results in criminal charges. The program is voluntary and free of charge for businesses; those who issue bad checks pay all administrative costs. Bad check cases are reviewed by the office for acceptance into the program and issuers are required to complete classes in responsible check writing, budgeting, and the consequences of repeated criminal conduct.

Habitual Criminal Sentencings Increase, A Reflection of the Office's Strong Stance Against Repeat Offenders

In December 2017, the Washoe County District Attorney's Office issued a news release on the prosecution of a habitual criminal convicted on burglary charges and sentenced to 25 years in prison. The defendant had already accumulated 9 prior felony convictions when she was arrested on multiple theft charges. Due to her repeated criminal conduct, the prosecutor sought a habitual criminal sentence, which resulted in a significantly higher prison term.

The case was one of 13 habitual criminal convictions secured last year, highlighting the office's commitment to aggressively prosecuting repeat offenders. In these cases, securing lengthy prison sentences are necessary to prevent new victims from falling prey to their crimes. **Here are a few examples of the habitual offender convictions from 2017:**



Kevin Scott Clausen (52) was sentenced in January to four concurrent life terms in prison without the possibility of parole. Clausen was convicted on attempted murder and robbery with a deadly weapon charges stemming from a shooting that occurred at a Reno 7-Eleven. On the day of the shooting, the Reno Police Department responded to a report of a woman who had been shot in the head. A subsequent investigation determined that Clausen and two accomplices had targeted the store's owner and that Clausen had shot the woman during the robbery. Prosecutors Kelly Kossow and Adam Cate secured

a habitual criminal sentence for Clausen based on his continuous criminal activity that spanned 30 years, the fact that he had absconded from parole on a prior case at the time he committed the 7-Eleven robbery, the callousness of his actions during the robbery, and the danger that he posed to the community if ever released. In her argument, Chief Deputy District Attorney Kossow stated that Clausen was the epitome of a habitual criminal and exactly the kind of offender for which the statute was designed.



Christopher Paul Lyons (37) was sentenced last January to 24 years in prison following a burglary conviction. Lyons had a criminal history that spanned over 19 years when he was arrested for breaking into a Washoe County home and ransacking it before stealing guns and hunting items that were never recovered. During sentencing, Chief Deputy District Attorney Kristin Erickson argued that within weeks or months, sometimes even days of Lyons being released on parole, he would commit new criminal offenses. She added that Lyons had continuously victimized this community and the only time he was not

committing crimes was when he had been incarcerated.



Bobby Lloyd Mann (56) was sentenced last September on fraud charges to two concurrent 25 year prison terms. Mann's criminal history contained 14 felony convictions that spanned 35 years and included multiple fraud-related crimes. In his most recent case, ROP detectives linked him to the passing of fraudulent checks throughout the Reno/Sparks area. The investigation determined that Mann had forged multiple checks connected to various bank accounts and fraudulently obtained thousands of dollars in cash and goods. At sentencing, Deputy District Attorney Matt Lee argued Mann had again defrauded unsuspecting victims in our community, behavior which he has repeated throughout his adult life. Lee pointed out that within four months of his prior release from prison, Mann returned to forging and altering checks, a consistent pattern in his criminal career.



Christopher Stewart Woodstone (36) was sentenced last September to 25 years in prison for having beaten a homeless shelter employee. Woodstone had been asked to leave the shelter by staff who had received disturbance complaints about him. He responded by punching a male staff member in the face and breaking his jaw. Woodstone fled after the battery, but was arrested by the Reno Police Department a week later. At sentencing, Deputy District Attorney Kevin Naughton argued that the lengthy habitual sentence was appropriate for someone with Woodstone's violent criminal history which included convictions for robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, and domestic battery.



Charlotte Marie Hodges (37) was sentenced to 25 years in prison in connection with recent convictions for burglary, possession of stolen property, possession of credit cards without consent, and attempted use of a stolen credit card. Hodges was arrested after she was linked to multiple incidents of mail theft, fraud, and vehicle burglaries across Washoe County and the neighboring counties of Douglas, Carson, and areas of Northern California. At sentencing, Deputy District Attorney Carrie Morton argued that the defendant's latest crime spree was linked to over 100 victims and that her criminal conduct over the past 17 years had earned her habitual criminal status.



IN THE NEWS

Washoe County Child Advocacy Center Receives 2017 Impact Award



In 2017, Washoe County Government held a special awards ceremony to recognize employees and programs that impact the community. The first annual "Washoe Impact Awards" were held in October at the Washoe County Commission Chambers. The awards program included four categories: Integrity, Effective Communication, Quality Public Service, and the Manager's Choice for Commitment to Excellence. Winners were chosen from among 13 finalists and once again, the Washoe County Child Advocacy Center's (CAC) multi-disciplinary team received well-deserved recognition. The CAC was this year's Washoe Impact QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICE Award winner for outstanding work on behalf of children in our community. The WCDA Family Support Division was also recognized as a finalist in the awards ceremony. Great job to all involved in these exemplary programs!

Community Engagement & Forums

The District Attorney's Office continues to engage the community. Representatives of the office attend speaking events and community forums throughout the year and meet regularly with community leaders to discuss upcoming issues and office initiatives. In 2017, the WCDA's Office attended a variety of community events and provided updates to the County Commission, Reno and Sparks City Councils, senior citizen advisory boards and coalitions, area leadership groups, and many more.



WCDA's Office Holiday Cheer



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